

MINUTES
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission Meeting
FWP Headquarters - Helena, MT
March 14, 2013

Commission Members Present: Bob Ream, Chairman
Dan Vermillion Vice-Chairman, Shane Colton (via video)
Ron Moody (via telephone)

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Staff Present: Jeff Hagener, Director and FWP Staff.

Guests: March 14, 2013 Commission file folder for sign-in sheet.

Topics of Discussion:

1. Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Minutes of February 14, 2013 Commission Meeting
3. Approval of Commission Expenses
4. Commission Reports
5. Director's Report
6. Canyon Ferry and Lake Helena Commercial Fishing Regulations - Final
7. Future Fisheries Project ~ Winter 2013 Funding Cycle - Approval
8. Open Microphone – Public Opportunity to Address FWP Issues Not on Agenda

1. Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Ream called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of the Commission Meeting Minutes of February 14, 2013

Action: Commissioner Moody and Commissioner Vermillion seconded the motion to approve the February 14, 2013 minutes. Motion carried.

3. Approval of Commission Expenses

Action: Commissioner Vermillion moved and Commissioner Colton seconded the motion to approve the Commission expenses. Motion Carried.

4. Commission Reports

Commissioner Vermillion reported he has been meeting with the trapping community to find common ground for all involved, very difficult. Had a meeting with the Citizen Advisory Council to explain his process on the Milk River acquisition. Thanked Commissioner Moody for all his work during the past four years.

Commissioner Colton introduced and welcomed newly appointed Region 5 Commissioner Matthew Tourtlotte. Thanked Commissioner Moody for his tireless efforts; he is an important voice for the sportsmen and sportswomen to have.

Commissioner Moody stated it has been an educational experience and has enjoyed being part of the Commission the last four years.

Chairman Ream welcomed Commissioner Tourtlotte and looks forward to working with him. Thanked Commissioner Moody, Colton and Stafne for their work. Faced a lot of challenges in the last four years. Has been working with various constituent groups on different issues.

5. Director's Report

Director Hagener acknowledged the newly appointed Commissioners: Richard Stuker, Chinook, District 3; Lawrence Wetsit, Wolf Point, District 4; Matthew Tourtlotte, Billings, District 5. Setting up meeting with former Wolf Advisory Council members to discuss the Wolf Management Plan. Planning on having Commission meetings around the state beginning June or July in the Chinook/Havre area. Assembling a Sage Grouse Task Force to look at Sage Grouse issues and the possibility of delisting. Going to establish a work group to review all licenses and fees. Meet with the Regional USFWS, mainly discussed wolverine listing and trapping issues, sage grouse and Intake Dam. Had a lengthy discussion with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) regarding sage grouse and the Sage Grouse Task Force.

6. Canyon Ferry and Lake Helena Commercial Fishing Regulations – Final

Bruce Rich, Fisheries Administrator explained FWP received an application for a 2013 commercial fishing permit to harvest carp via active seining from Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena. The Commission is authorized to approve one commercial fishing operation for each body of water and to establish specific permit regulations as deemed necessary. This application is for a Class B Permit that requires a fee of \$200 plus a \$1,000 Surety Bond. At the January 2013 meeting, the Commission proposed regulations that would govern this permit. FWP's recommendations for final regulations are included in the information package (see attached). Commercial fishing regulations for Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena were originally approved by the Commission in 2005 after public input and an environmental assessment. FWP received one comment that expressed support.

Action: Commissioner Colton moved and Commissioner Moody seconded the Commission approve the permit and regulations for a commercial fishing operation on Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena for 2013.

Action on Motion: Motion Passed

7. Future Fisheries Project ~ Winter 2013 Funding Cycle – Approval

Bruce Rich, Fisheries Administrator explained the Future Fisheries Improvement Program (FFIP) provides funds for projects that restore fishery habitats in streams, rivers and lakes for the benefit of wild fisheries. Applications for funding are reviewed twice each year by a 14-member Future Fisheries Citizen Review Panel appointed by the Governor or his designee. The panel prioritizes its recommendations and forwards them to the FWP Commission every six months for consideration and approval. For the winter 2013 funding cycle, the panel received 17 applications and identified 16 for potential funding. A ranking committee consisting of one panel member and two FWP staff ranked the projects identified by the full panel. To stay within the amount of Program money currently available, the Ranking Committee recommends that the Commission fund 15 of the proposals at a cost of \$585,490. Matching funds, or in-kind contributions from outside sources, total \$1,819,064. The public was informed about the opportunity to apply for program funding via news releases, a public meeting and information posted on the website. The Future Fisheries Citizen Review Panel conducted a public meeting in Helena on December 18, 2012 to review funding applications, discuss proposed projects with applicants in attendance, and receive public comment. No public comments were received. FWP prepared environmental assessments for projects recommended for funding, except for those proposals that are categorically excluded under the Montana Environmental Policy Act, those subject to the Federal National Environmental Policy Act or some other ongoing FWP regional process.

Action: Commissioner Vermillion moved and Commissioner Colton seconded the FWP Commission approve the funding recommendations as submitted by the Ranking Committee for the winter 2013 Funding Cycle of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program.

Chairman Ream asked for public comment.

Commissioner Vermillion asked where the funding comes from.

Mark Leary explained there are two different sources of income. Funds for the Future Fisheries Improvement Program come from River Restoration Program dollars that are derived from a \$0.50 earmark on resident fishing licenses and \$1.00 earmark on non-resident licenses. Major source of funding is for the Bull Trout and Cutthroat Trout Enhancement Program and derived from appropriations to the Resource Indemnity Trust Fund (RIT)

Action on Motion: Motion Passed

8. Open Microphone – Public Opportunity to Address FWP Issues Not on Agenda

Iona Popper, Bear Creek Council (BCC) stated the BCC would like FWP to make changes regarding wolves in Montana. BCC asked to combine units 313/316 into one Wolf Management Unit (WMU), permanently limit the quota to one wolf in combined WMU 313/316 and restore a statewide wolf hunt and WMU quotas. BCC favors the hunt boundaries of 2011, which limit a high take on Yellowstone National Park wolves. Wolf tourism is essential to Montana's economy and Montana must recognize Montanans involved in wildlife tourism as stakeholders in debates about wolves in Montana. Stated FWP received 750 public comments from Montanans; 554 supported the hunt closure and 196 opposed it, need to listen to the citizens of Montana.

The meeting adjourned at 9:13 a.m.

Dan Vermillion, Chairman

M. Jeff Hagener, Director